

PATENT

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

In re Application of:	Terence Gerard Daly	Examiner:	Cross, Alan
Application No.:	10/615,888	Group Art Unit:	3714
Filing Date:	July 8, 2003	Confirmation No.	9852
Office Action Date:	January 3, 2007	Docket No.	83336.0631
Title:	Bonus Game Using a Subset of Reels	Customer No.	30076

Commissioner for Patents
P. O. Box 1450
Alexandria, VA 22313-1450

37 CFR § 1.131 Declaration of Prior Invention

Dear Sir or Madam:

I, Terence Daly, declare as follows:

1. I am the inventor of claims 1, 3, 4, 6-16, and 18-31 in the above-referenced patent application (U.S. Patent Application Serial No. 10/615,888), and I am the inventor of the subject matter described and claimed therein.

2. Prior to May 29, 2003, I had completed my invention as described and claimed in the subject application in this country, as evidenced by the following:

A. Prior to May 29, 2003, having earlier conceived the idea of a Bonus Game Using a Subset of Reels, I prepared an invention disclosure statement describing my invention that was subsequently forwarded to the law firm of Brown Raysman Millstein Felder & Steiner LLP for drafting into a patent application. This is evidenced by the prepared cover letter and patent application (including drawings), for the Bonus Game Using a Subset of Reels, which

Atty Docket No.: 83336/631
Serial No. 10/615,888

documents were delivered to Bally Gaming, Inc. prior to May 29, 2003. A copy of these documents are attached hereto as Exhibits A and B.

B. As can be seen from the prepared cover letter, which is attached hereto as Exhibit A, the completed application was sent to Ms. Monica Finta, Esq. (who was the assistant General Counsel at that time) of Bally Gaming, Inc. (a division of Alliance Gaming Corporation).¹

C. As can be seen from the prepared patent application for the Bonus Game Using a Subset of Reels, which is attached hereto as Exhibit B, the law firm of Brown Raysman Millstein Felder & Steiner LLP properly completed their assignment to produce the patent application, in accordance with my invention disclosure statement.

3. Each of the dates deleted from the Exhibits is prior to May 29, 2003.

4. All statements made herein of my own knowledge are true, and all statements made on information and belief are believed to be true. I understand that willful false statements and the like are punishable by fine or imprisonment, or both (18 U.S.C. 1001) and may jeopardize the validity of the application or any patent issuing thereon.

Respectfully submitted,

Dated: April 3, 2007

Terence Daly
Terence Daly
formerly of Bally Gaming, Inc.

Enclosures (Exhibits A and B)

¹ The cover letter, declaration, and assignment initially referenced Marv Hein as the inventor instead of Terence Daly. This issue was corrected before filing of the application.

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Re: Application for U.S. Letters Patent
Entitled: BONUS GAME USING A SUBSET OF REELS
Inventor(s): Marv Hein
Our Docket No.: 10407/631

Dear Monica:

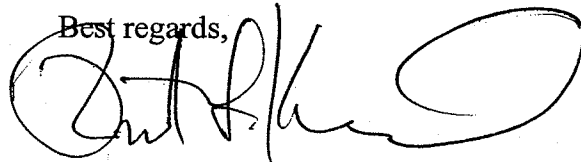
Enclosed for your review is a draft of the above-identified patent application, a copy of the penciled drawings, a Declaration and Power of Attorney, as well as an Assignment for Marv Hein's signature.

Please note that the declaration contains an acknowledgement of the inventor's duty to disclose all information of which he is aware that is material to the examination of the application. This is a continuing duty, which does not terminate upon filing of the application. The purpose of the disclosure requirement is to ensure that the Patent and Trademark Office has before it all of the prior art that may affect the validity of a patent. Failure to satisfy the disclosure requirement may result in loss of patent rights, as well as other potentially serious consequences.

After the application has been reviewed, and the Declaration and Assignment have been executed, please return these items to us for filing in the Patent and Trademark Office.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Best regards,



Robert L. Kovelman
For BROWN RAYSMAN MILLSTEIN
FELDER & STEINER, LLP

RLK:elm
Enclosures

APPLICATION

OF

MARV HEIN

FOR

UNITED STATES LETTERS PATENT

ON

BONUS GAME USING A SUBSET OF REELS

Docket No.: 10407/631

Sheets of Drawings: 4

Attorneys

BROWN RAYSMAN MILLSTEIN FELDER & STEINER LLP
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EXPRESS MAIL NO.

BONUS GAME USING A SUBSET OF REELS

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Field of the Invention

This invention relates generally to a reel spinning game, and more particularly, to a reel spinning game where a subset of reels are selected by a player from a plurality of spinning reels, and this subset of selected reels is used to determine the game result.

15

Background of the Invention

A standard slot machine includes between three and five rotatable reels for use in game play. On the periphery of each reel are gaming symbols, such as assorted fruit, numbers, and/or bar symbols. The reels are caused to spin until each reel reaches a resting position. The success or failure of the game is then determined by comparing the combination of reel symbols that are displayed when the reels are in their resting positions.

To add interest to the game, many different types of slot machine have developed over time. For example, in some slot machines the display windows show more than one adjacent symbol on each reel, thereby allow betting involving multiple rows. Other types of slot machines have also been developed to increase player interest that include "second chance" games. Typically, "second chance" games try to maintain player interest from a first game segment to a second game segment by providing the player with another opportunity to win.

However, there is a continuing need for additional slot machine variants that provide a player with enhanced excitement and diversity of game play, without departing so far from the original slot gaming concept that player comfort is lost. Further, there is a continuing need for a gaming machine that provides increased player excitement due to the visual entertainment that occurs specifically in response to the player's actions. Accordingly, those skilled in the art have long recognized the need for a gaming machine that addresses these issues. The present invention clearly fulfills these and other needs.

Summary of the Invention

Briefly, and in general terms, the present invention resolves the above and other
5 problems by providing a method for playing a reel selection slot machine. The gaming
method includes: spinning a plurality of reels within a display window with each reel
displaying one or more game symbols; selecting a subset of the plurality of reels for use in
determining a game outcome; removing the non-selected reels from a player's view within the
display window; consolidating the selected reels within the display window; determining if
10 the selected reels produce a winning game outcome; and awarding a prize if a winning game
outcome is achieved.

In one preferred embodiment, the consolidating of the selected reels involves moving
the selected reels into a traditional slot machine reel configuration. In another preferred
embodiment, the consolidating of the selected reels involves juxtapositioning the selected
15 reels to eliminate any non-contiguous positioning of the selected reels produced by the
removal the non-selected reels.

In accordance with another preferred embodiment, the selection of the subset of reels
for use in determining a game outcome is at least partially player controlled. However, in
another preferred embodiment, the selection of the subset of reels is at least partially
20 computer controlled.

In accordance with still another aspect of a preferred embodiment, the plurality of
reels are mechanical reels. In other preferred embodiments, the plurality of reels are video
representations of physical reels. In one preferred embodiment, the gaming method is used as
a bonus game in conjunction with an underlying primary game. As such, a winning game
25 outcome in the bonus game may result in awarding a bonus prize that is added to the prize
won in the underlying primary game. However, in other embodiment, a winning game
outcome in the bonus game may result in multiplying the prize won in the underlying primary
game.

Additionally, in accordance with still another preferred aspect, a non-winning game
30 outcome in the bonus game may reduce a prize won in the underlying primary game.
Furthermore, in some embodiments a non-winning game outcome in the bonus game includes
at least the possibility of losing a prize won in the underlying primary game. Finally, in yet
other preferred embodiments, the gaming method is used as a primary game.

In accordance with the present invention, a preferred gaming method may also be described as including: spinning a plurality of reels; selecting a subset of the plurality of reels for use in determining a game outcome; removing the non-selected reels from a player's view; rearranging the selected reels adjacent to one another; determining if the selected reels
5 produce a winning game outcome; and awarding a prize if a winning game outcome is achieved.

Still another preferred gaming method may only include: spinning a plurality of reels; selecting a subset of the plurality of reels for use in determining a game outcome; juxtapositioning the selected reels to eliminate any non-contiguous positioning of the selected
10 reels resulting from interstitial location of non-selected reels; determining if the selected reels produce a winning game outcome; and awarding a prize if a winning game outcome is achieved.

Other features and advantages of the present invention will become apparent from the following detailed description, taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings, which
15 illustrate by way of example, the features of the present invention.

Brief Description of the Drawings

FIGURE 1 illustrates a front view of a preferred embodiment, constructed in accordance with the present invention, having ten selectable reels;

20 FIGURE 2 illustrates a front view of the embodiment of FIGURE 1, with five of the reels having been selected for use in determining a game outcome, as shown by the highlighting of the selected reels;

FIGURE 3 illustrates a front view of the embodiment of FIGURE 1, showing the five reels that were selected for use in determining a game outcome after removal of the non-
25 selected reels; and

FIGURE 4 illustrates a front view of the embodiment of FIGURE 1, showing the five reels selected for use in determining a game outcome having been consolidated into positions adjacent one another in a traditional slot machine reel configuration.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

A preferred embodiment gaming method, implemented in accordance with the present invention, provides a player with the opportunity to play a game of slots by selecting, from a plurality of spinning reels, the subset of the reels that will be used to determine the game outcome, after the selected reels have been consolidated into substantially adjacent positions. In this manner, player excitement is derived and heightened from the visual entertainment that occurs when the non-selected reels are removed from a player's view, and the selected reels are repositioned into a traditional slot machine reel configuration. Referring now to the drawings, wherein like reference numerals denote like or corresponding parts throughout the drawings, and more particularly to FIGURES 1-4, there is shown a preferred reel selection gaming method.

Briefly stated, a preferred embodiment method of the present invention includes playing a slot style game in a gaming machine 10 by selecting, from a plurality of spinning reels 20, a subset of spinning reels that are repositioned and used as the game outcome result reels. As shown in FIG. 1, the gaming method preferably includes spinning the plurality of reels 20 within a display window 30 of the gaming machine 10. Each of the spinning reels 20 displays one or more game symbols along its periphery. Referring now to FIG. 2, the gaming method also includes selecting a subset of the spinning reels 20 to use in determining the game outcome. In FIG. 2, highlighting designates the selected reels; however, any other suitable technique may also be utilized.

Referring to FIG. 3, the gaming method further includes removal of the non-selected reels from a player's view within the display window 30. Additionally, as shown in FIG. 4, the gaming method includes consolidating the selected reels into a closer grouping within the display window. Further, the gaming method includes determining if the selected reels produce a winning game outcome and awarding a prize if a winning game outcome is achieved.

In one preferred method, the spinning of the selected reels is stopped after the consolidation of the selected reels within the display window. Alternatively, the spinning of the selected reels may instead be stopped before the consolidating of the selected reels. Furthermore, in other preferred embodiment methods, the spinning of selected reels is stopped before the removal of the non-selected reels from a player's view within the display window.

Referring again to FIG. 1, the gaming method preferably utilizes a gaming device 10 that has ten selectable reels 20 that are viewable within the display window 30. In other preferred embodiments, the gaming device 10 may utilize a greater or lesser number of selectable reels 20. Each of the reels 20 displays at least one game symbol on its periphery, which when stopped, can be viewed along a pay line to determine a game result. Preferably, the number of reels 20 included in the gaming device 10 is larger than that utilized for an individual game. In this regard, one preferred gaming method includes the selection of five of the ten reels 20 for use in determining a game outcome result. In other preferred embodiments, a greater or lesser number of the reels 20 may be selected for use in determining a game outcome result. Preferably, a microprocessor is used to randomly control the stopping of the spinning reels and thereby determine the game result for the gaming method of the present invention. The microprocessor also awards any prize achieved based upon that game result.

In one embodiment, the microprocessor automatically selects which of the plurality of reels 20 are used to determine the game outcome result, independent of player input. However, alternatively, the selection of the game outcome result reels may be at least partially player controlled. In this regard, some embodiments of the gaming method 10 incorporate touch screen technology (as shown in FIG. 2) that allows a player to select which of the reels 20 are to be used to determine the game result by touching a portion of the window 40 in front of the chosen reels. However, selection buttons (not shown) may also be implemented to designate which of the plurality of reels 20 are the game result reels.

Preferably, the consolidating of the selected reels involves juxtapositioning the selected reels (as shown in FIG. 3) to eliminate any non-contiguous positioning of the selected reels produced by the removal the non-selected reels (as shown in FIG. 4). Additionally, it will be understood that the gaming method 10 can utilize a greater or lesser number of reels. Other preferred embodiments may also utilize multiple pay lines, and thus, have more than one symbol position of each reel visible at a time through the display window 30.

A mechanical reel system may be used instead of the video reel system described above, without departing from the scope of the present invention. In such an embodiment, each reel preferably includes a stepper motor to spin the reel. Further, in this mechanical embodiment, each reel is associated with a retractable arm that allows non-selected reels to be

removed from a player's view, and the selected reels to be consolidated into position adjacent to one another. Alternatively, a hybrid slot system may be used in which some of the reels in the slot machine are mechanical while other of the reels in the slot machine are produced by a video display.

5 The gaming method is preferably used as a bonus game in conjunction with an underlying primary game. As such, a winning game outcome in the bonus game may result in awarding a bonus prize that is added to the prize won in the underlying primary game. .
Alternatively, a winning game outcome in the bonus game may result in multiplying the prize won in the underlying primary game. Additionally, in accordance with still another aspect of
10 a preferred embodiment, a non-winning game outcome in the bonus game may reduce a prize won in the underlying primary game. Furthermore, a non-winning game outcome in the bonus game may also include at least the possibility of losing the prize won in the underlying primary game. However, it will be understood that the gaming method may also be used as a primary game, without departing from the scope of the present invention.

15 Furthermore, the various methodologies described above are provided by way of illustration only and should not be construed to limit the invention. Those skilled in the art will readily recognize various modifications and changes may be made to the present invention without departing from the true spirit and scope of the present invention.
Accordingly, it is not intended that the invention be limited, except as by the appended
20 claims.

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A gaming method for playing a reel selection slot machine, the method comprising:

spinning a plurality of reels within a display window, the plurality of reels each displaying one or more game symbols;

5 selecting a subset of the spinning reels for use in determining a game outcome;
removing the non-selected reels from a player's view within the display window;
consolidating the selected reels within the display window; and
determining if the selected reels produce a winning game outcome, and awarding a prize if a winning game outcome is achieved.

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2. The method of claim 1, further comprising: stopping the spinning of the selected reels, after the consolidating of the selected reels within the display window.

3. The method of claim 1, further comprising: stopping the spinning of the selected reels, before the consolidating of the selected reels within the display window.

4. The method of claim 1, further comprising: stopping the spinning of the selected reels, before the removing of the non-selected reels from a player's view within the display window.

5. The method of claim 1, wherein consolidating the selected reels within the display window comprises juxtapositioning the selected reels to eliminate any non-contiguous positioning of the selected reels produced by the removal the non-selected reels.

6. The method of claim 1, wherein the selection of the subset of reels for use in determining a game outcome is at least partially player controlled.
7. The method of claim 1, wherein the selection of the subset of reels for use in determining a game outcome is at least partially computer controlled.
8. The method of claim 1, wherein the plurality of reels are mechanical reels.
9. The method of claim 1, wherein the plurality of reels are video representations of physical reels.
10. The method of claim 1, wherein the gaming method is used as a bonus game in conjunction with an underlying primary game.
11. The method of claim 10, wherein a winning game outcome in the bonus game results in a prize that is added to a prize won in the underlying primary game.
12. The method of claim 10, wherein a winning game outcome in the bonus game results in multiplying a prize won in the underlying primary game.
13. The method of claim 10, wherein a non-winning game outcome in the bonus game reduces a prize won in the underlying primary game.

5

14. The method of claim 10, wherein a non-winning game outcome in the bonus game includes at least the possibility of losing a prize won in the underlying primary game.

15. The method of claim 1, wherein the gaming method is used as a primary game.

16. A gaming method for playing a reel selection slot machine that includes a plurality of reels, the method comprising:

spinning the plurality of reels;

selecting a subset of the spinning reels for use in determining a game outcome;

5 removing the non-selected reels from a player's view;

rearranging the selected reels adjacent to one another; and

determining if the selected reels produce a winning game outcome, and awarding a prize if a winning game outcome is achieved.

17. The method of claim 16, further comprising: stopping the spinning of the selected reels, after the rearranging of the selected reels adjacent to one another.

18. The method of claim 16, further comprising: stopping the spinning of the selected reels, before the rearranging of the selected reels adjacent to one another.

19. The method of claim 16, further comprising: stopping the spinning of the selected reels, before the removing of the non-selected reels from a player's view.

20. The method of claim 16, wherein rearranging the selected reels within the display window comprises juxtapositioning the selected reels to eliminate any non-contiguous positioning of the selected reels produced by the removal the non-selected reels.
21. The method of claim 16, wherein the selection of the subset of reels for use in determining a game outcome is at least partially player controlled.
22. The method of claim 16, wherein the selection of the subset of reels for use in determining a game outcome is at least partially computer controlled.
23. The method of claim 16, wherein the plurality of reels are mechanical reels.
24. The method of claim 16, wherein the plurality of reels are video representations of physical reels.
25. The method of claim 16, wherein the gaming method is used as a bonus game in conjunction with an underlying primary game.
26. The method of claim 23, wherein a winning game outcome in the bonus game results in a prize that is added to a prize won in the underlying primary game.
27. The method of claim 23, wherein a winning game outcome in the bonus game results in multiplying a prize won in the underlying primary game.

28. The method of claim 23, wherein a non-winning game outcome in the bonus game reduces a prize won in the underlying primary game.

29. The method of claim 23, wherein a non-winning game outcome in the bonus game includes at least the possibility of losing a prize won in the underlying primary game.

30. The method of claim 16, wherein the gaming method is used as a primary game.

31. A gaming method for playing a reel selection slot machine, the method comprising:

spinning a plurality of reels, each reel displaying game symbols thereon;

selecting a subset of the spinning reels for use in determining a game outcome;

5 juxapositioning the selected reels to eliminate any non-contiguous positioning of the selected reels resulting from interstitial location of non-selected reels; and

determining if the selected reels produce a winning game outcome, and awarding a prize if a winning game outcome is achieved.

BONUS GAME USING A SUBSET OF REELS**Abstract of the Invention**

A gaming method includes spinning the plurality of reels 20 within a display window 30 of the gaming machine 10. A subset of the spinning reels 20 is then selected for use in determining the game outcome. The non-selected reels are removed from a player's view within the display window 30. The selected reels are then appealingly repositioned into a closer grouping within the display window. The gaming machine then determines if the selected and repositioned reels produce a winning game outcome. A prize is awarded if a winning game outcome is achieved.
